Latin American Politics
Research Paper Fall 2013

Paper Format
Your final paper will be 12-15 pages plus a bibliography and an abstract. 12-point font, double spaced.

The paper will include five main parts, plus an abstract and bibliography:
1. Introductory paragraph and “road map” paragraph
2. Background section
3. Argument and evidence
4. Analysis of policy or solutions to problem or suggestions for policy or reforms
5. Conclusion

1. Introductory Paragraph and “Road map” paragraph
   (1 page, see reverse for example)
   The introductory paragraph grabs your reader’s attention, sums up your main question and argument, and gives a sense of why the material is important. The “roadmap” guides the reader and lays out what your paper will cover and what the reader should expect.

2. Background (3-5 pages)
   Context-information that the reader will need to know in order to understand your question and your explanation.

3. Your argument-the answer to your question (4-6 pages)
   Your explanation, your evidence
   Build your argument, one idea at a time (For many of you, the argument will be multifaceted)
   Show the evidence for your argument, lay it out in a logical fashion
   Strong papers will also lay out and disprove counterarguments (Start by laying out the counterarguments, disprove them, then introduce your argument and lay it out with evidence)

4. The Policy/Solutions Section (3-5 pages)
   Your analysis of the policy (for ex; NAFTA is working, it failed, it has good and bad but this is how you would change it)
   Solutions to the problem being studied (for ex: ways to end trafficking in Guatemala)

5. Conclusion (1/2 to 2 pages)
   Implications or your research
   Summary concluding paragraph

*Bibliography
Minimum 7 academic sources (peer-reviewed articles, academic books, government documents, publications from international organizations).

www.jstor.org is a good search engine for journal articles, but doesn’t have the most recent issues. Visit your librarian and ask for academic indexes for Latin American journals (ex: HAPI).
Good journals for Latin America are:

*Latin American Research Review*, *Journal of Latin American Studies*,
*Latin American Politics and Society*. Also, there may be journals on your topic, for example,
*Human Rights Quarterly* or the *Journal of Democracy*. *Comparative Politics* and *Comparative Political Studies* also cover Latin American topics. Academic journals in other languages are also acceptable. You may also use reports from approved institutions and foundations, such as USAID, the Washington Office on Latin America, the World Bank, Amnesty International, Open Society, etc. Newspapers, news magazines, encyclopedias, web chat pages do not count.

**A good introductory paragraph includes:**

- Your Issue
- Your Question
  (Try and capture the attention of your reader-present your issue
  and question as a puzzle, an oxymoron, or something that is not
  obvious and requires deeper investigation)
- Your Argument summed up in a sentence or two
- Why your question is important
  (Does your particular issue relate to larger social concerns, to democracy, to
  human rights, to political development—does it touch on moral or ethical
  questions, or to issues of welfare and standards of living? Is it important for other
  Latin American or developing countries?)

**Example:**

Immediately after coming to power in December 1994, Mexico’s new president Ernesto Zedillo announced a constitutional reform that appeared to greatly increase the power of the Mexican Supreme Court. Traditionally, a country’s political leaders are expected to take action to increase, or at least maintain, their level of political power. Thus, Mexico’s 1994 judicial reform presents a paradox: why would a president willfully introduce reforms that would limit his own authority? I argue that Mexico’s judicial reform makes sense given the decreasing power of Mexico’s ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in the 1990s. The PRI came to see an empowered Supreme Court as a way of challenging decisions made by state legislatures and governorships which had fallen into opposition hands in the July 1994 elections. While this paper specifically addresses Mexico’s judicial reform, it sheds light on the process of judicial reform in other developing countries. The creation of powerful supreme courts is a necessary prerequisite for the protection of human rights, and this paper seeks to contribute to our understanding of the process by which courts can be empowered so as to guarantee individual rights and liberties.

**The “Roadmap” paragraph**

The “Roadmap” paragraph allows you to direct your reader by laying out the structure of your paper. Place it after your intro paragraph.

**Example from a paper on Mexico:**

This paper is divided into five sections. Section I provides the necessary framework to evaluate the changes in Mexico’s judiciary. It defines judicial power, discusses the differences between common law and civil law tradition, and includes an overview of recent judicial reforms in Latin America. Section II details Mexico’s comprehensive December 1994 judicial reform package, analyzes the judiciary’s new “rules of the game,” and documents post-1994 Supreme Court rulings that demonstrate the empowerment of the judicial branch. Section III presents a theoretical argument for judicial reform, arguing that meaningful reform will occur where ruling parties fear loss of office. Section IV applies my theory to the Mexican case and Section V concludes by using the Mexican experience with judicial reform to suggest implications for institutional reforms in other transitioning democracies.
1. Always make a detailed outline. This allows you to make sure your ideas are well organized and in the right place.

2. Break your paper into sections. Use “headers”! Think about the book chapters or journal articles you read. There are headers separating sections and identifying what that section is about. You are not writing a long essay! You are marshalling ideas and evidence to build a convincing argument!

3. Include a strong introductory paragraph and a roadmap. Rewrite/fine-tune your introduction when you have finished the paper to best guide your reader.

4. I love sesquipedalians, but look up words you don’t know before you use them!

5. Do not start a sentence with numerals unless they are written out. Ex: “65% of the public opposed the law.” This should be written as “Sixty five percent of the public opposed the law.”

6. Unless you are Victor Hugo, if your paragraph is one page, it’s too long. Break it up!

7. Eliminate multiple pronouns in a sentence. “He told him to sign it and he did it later after he had had another meeting.”

8. Eliminate the passive voice. The law was decreed against the wishes of some members of congress” should be “The liberal president decreed the law, thereby upsetting the conservative majority that dominated the Mexican congress.”

9. All facts and direct quotes must be cited. Author, year, and page number is sufficient. Ex: Finkel states that the courts are the least respected political institution in Latin America (Finkel, 2003, 99). According to Finkel, 85% of the Peruvian public is afraid to utilize the courts (Finkel, 2004, 33). The period goes at the end of the sentence. Footnotes are fine; they must also cite author, date, and page number. Each statement must be footnoted.

Citing an author’s argument- you don’t need the page number unless you are using a direct quote of the author’s own works. Ex: Finkel argues that judicial reforms are likely to be successful only where ruling parties fear loss of political power (Finkel 2004). The full cite (Finkel, Jodi. 2008. *Judicial Reform as Political Insurance*, etc… goes in the bibliography.

10. Do not ever use the word “get.” Got it?

11. Proof read your work with fresh eyes. That means finishing it two days before it is due! Or swap your paper with a friend and edit each other’s work. By correcting the writing of a peer you will improve your own writing ability.

Take pride in your work. You are delivering a paper with your name on it representing the best you can do. Show me your best!
Research design and bibliography, typed, are due the beginning of class Mon Nov 4.

Please identify:

1. Your Country

2. Your Question

3. Your argument. This is your best explanation at this time. It is okay if you change your argument after you have conducted more research. Your argument may be multi-faceted. (Next, you will be considering what evidence do you need to demonstrate that your argument is true.)

4. Other potential explanations. Make a stab at this! Good research examines all potential explanations. You might later build these other potential explanations into your own argument. They might be complements to your own explanation and together lead to a richer and more satisfying argument. Also, by countering other potential explanations, you add credence to your own argument. (Next, you will be considering what evidence do you need to demonstrate that these arguments are not true.)

5. Attach your bibliography to the research design.
   (Minimum of seven academic sources)

All research designs and bibliographies must be approved.

Late Policy: Any research design handed in late will result in point deductions from your final grade.
I. What is an abstract?
Abstracts must include sufficient information for reviewers to judge the nature and significance of the topic, the adequacy of the investigative strategy, the nature of the results, and the conclusions. The abstract should summarize the substantive results of the work and not merely list topics to be discussed. An abstract is an outline/brief summary of your paper and your whole project. It should have an intro, body and conclusion. It is a well-developed paragraph, should be exact in wording, and must be understandable to a wide audience. Abstracts should be no more than 300 words and single-spaced. The abstract highlights major points of content and answers why your work is important, what was your purpose, how you went about your project, what you learned, and what you concluded. (This paragraph on abstracts is taken from www.sccur.uci.edu).

The abstract goes on your title page, usually indented on both sides, below the title.

II. Potential abstracts structures for your paper:
Each item should be one or two sentences. You can lift sentences/parts of sentences directly from you paper.

Version 1
your issue
your question
your argument (or main findings)
why this issue is important
implications for policy

Version 2
your issue and why it is important
your question
your argument

Version 3
your issue and question
why important
your argument
your main findings

Version 4
your issue
why important
your argument or main finding
policy implications

Version 5
your issue and question
why important
your argument
what your research suggests-changes in how we think about things

For larger research papers, a sentence is often added about the methodology utilized (“By examining all court cases between 1994 and 1999, I show that…” or, “A statistical analysis of 25 countries in the developing world demonstrates that treating grounding water reduces parasites by 15%.”)